

THE YEAR'S POETRY

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A REPRESENTATIVE SELECTION

Compiled by
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PREFACE

THIS selection has been made from poems written or published between the summer of 1933 and the summer of 1934, and includes a large number of poems not hitherto printed. It is designed to illustrate the development of English poetry; and will, it is hoped, be the first of an annual series.

With a view to making the book representative in the broadest sense, the compilation has been entrusted to three individuals, each with emphatic and distinct opinions about poetry. There have, of course, been occasions on which the editors have not been in agreement, but when this has happened each has been prepared, if outvoted, to sacrifice his preferences and prejudices, while serious disagreement has been obviated to a large extent by the determination of the editors to approach their task as objectively as possible.

Their aim has been, briefly, to select, not what they severally regarded as the best individual poems of the year, but rather the poems which best represent contemporary tendencies and poets whose work they regard as significant. It follows, therefore, that the number of examples of any one poet's work is not necessarily an index of the editors' estimate of relative importance.

The poems are arranged according to the age of

their authors, in the belief that this will enable readers to judge tendencies and influences more easily than is the case when the usual alphabetical method is adopted. The one necessary exception is the long poem by Laura Riding and Robert Graves which is printed at the end of the book.

In conclusion, the Editors offer their grateful thanks for the cordial co-operation of contributors, as well as for the good wishes and constructive suggestions received from prominent poets who have written no poetry during the period which the book covers. Acknowledgments are also due to Messrs Macmillan & Co. for permission to print the four poems by W. B. Yeats from *The Winding Stair*; to Messrs Faber & Faber for permission to print the extract from "Agamemnon's Tomb" from Sacheverell Sitwell's *Canons of Giant Art* and "Instructions before Dinner" and "On a grave of the Drowned" from Ronald Bottrall's *Festivals of Fire*; to Messrs Heinemann for permission to print the poem by John Masefield from *The Conway* and the extract from Robert Nichols' *Fisbo*; to the Hogarth Press for permission to include "The Lake" from the first volume of Miss Sackville-West's *Collected Poems* and "The Trench" from John Lehmann's *The Noise of History*; to Messrs Gerald Duckworth & Co. for permission to print "Two Songs" from Miss Edith Sitwell's *Five Variations on a Theme*; to Messrs Sidgwick and Jackson for permis-

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Acknowledgments are also due to the Editors of the following periodicals: *The Criterion*, *New Verse*, *The Listener*, *The New Statesman & Nation*, *The Spectator*, *The Week-end Review*, *The London Mercury*, *The Fortnightly Review*.

D. K. R.
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THE YEAR'S POETRY

COOLE AND BALLYLEE



UNDER my window-ledge the waters race,
Otters below and moor-hens on the top,
Run for a mile undimmed in Heaven's face
Then darkening through 'dark' Raftery's 'cellar' drop,
Run underground, rise in a rocky place
In Coole demesne, and there to finish up
Spread to a lake and drop into a hole.
What's water but the generated soul?

Upon the border of that lake's a wood
Now all dry sticks under a wintry sun,
And in a copse of beeches there I stood,
For Nature's pulled her tragic buskin on
And all the rant's a mirror of my mood:
At sudden thunder of the mounting swan
I turned about and looked where branches break
The glittering reaches of the flooded lake.

Another emblem there! That stormy white
But seems a concentration of the sky;
And, like the soul, it sails into the sight
And in the morning's gone, no man knows why;
And is so lovely that it sets to right
What knowledge or its lack had set awry,
So arrogantly pure, a child might think
It can be murdered with a spot of ink.

W. B. Sound of a stick upon the floor, a sound
Yeats From somebody that toils from chair to chair;
Beloved books that famous hands have bound,
Old marble heads, old pictures everywhere;
Great rooms where travelled men and children found
Content or joy; a last inheritor
Where none has reigned that lacked a name and fame
Or out of folly into folly came.

A spot whereon the founders lived and died
Seemed once more dear than life; ancestral trees
Or gardens rich in memory glorified
Marriages, alliances and families,
And every bride's ambition satisfied.
Where fashion or mere fantasy decrees
Man shifts about—all that great glory spent—
Like some poor Arab tribesman and his tent.

We were the last romantics—chose for theme
Traditional sanctity and loveliness;
Whatever's written in what poets name
The book of the people; whatever most can bless
The mind of man or elevate a rhyme;
But all is changed, that high horse riderless,
Though mounted in that saddle Homer rode
Where the swan drifts upon a darkening flood.

THE MOTHER OF GOD

THE three-fold terror of love; a fallen flare
Through the hollow of an ear;
Wings beating about the room;
The terror of all terrors that I bore
The Heavens in my womb.

Had I not found content among the shows
Every common woman knows,
Chimney corner, garden walk,
Or rocky cistern where we tread the clothes
And gather all the talk?

What is this flesh I purchased with my pains,
This fallen star my milk sustains,
This love that makes my heart's blood stop
Or strikes a sudden chill into my bones
And bids my hair stand up?

W. B.
Yeats

From WORDS FOR MUSIC PERHAPS

SPEECH after long silence; it is right,
All other lovers being estranged or dead,
Unfriendly lamplight hid under its shade,
The curtains drawn upon unfriendly night,
That we descant and yet again descant
Upon the supreme theme of Art and Song:
Bodily decrepitude is wisdom; young
We loved each other and were ignorant.

DEATH

NOR dread nor hope attend
A dying animal;
A man awaits his end
Dreading and hoping all;
Many times he died,
Many times rose again.
A great man in his pride
Confronting murderous men
Casts derision upon
Supersession of breath;
He knows death to the bone—
Man has created death.

W. H.
Davies

SCANDAL

THIS is God's poorest lambing-time,
Our life is one of evil;
Who'll bring me news that's kind and sweet,
Where Mercy shames the devil?
We leap like fleas before we look,
On any sin or lie;
Unless I hear more kindness soon,
I'll laugh until I die.
I'll put this injured Bee to rest,
Safe on a mossy stone—
Till Scandal, blackening all that's white,
Has said "Good-bye," and gone.

THE PLAYERS

TO-DAY I acted Christ,
While Joy played Lazarus;
I buried her in ferns,
And heaps of gathered grass.
And when I cried "Come forth!"
Up from the grave she rose
And, with a peal of bells,
Threw off her burial clothes.

When Sleep this night has come
With feathers for our grass,
Shall we reverse our parts
Of Christ and Lazarus?
When I—a buried man—
Hear "Lazarus, come forth!"
I'll rise and, with both hands,
Ring every bell on earth!

Walter
de la Mare

THE BOTTLE

OF GREEN and hexagonal glass,
With sharp, fluted sides—
Vaguely transparent these walls,
Wherein motionless hides
A simple so potent it can
To oblivion lull
The weary, the racked, the bereaved,
The miserable.

Flowers in silent desire
Their life-breath exhale—
Self-heal, hellebore, aconite,
Chamomile, dwale:
Sharing the same gentle heavens,
The sun's heat and light,
And, in the dust at their roots,
The same shallow night.

Each its own livelihood hath,
Shape, pattern, hue;
Age on to age unto these
Keeping steadfastly true;
And, musing amid them, there moves
A stranger, named Man,
Who of their ichor distils
What virtue he can;

Plucks them ere seed-time to blazon
His house with their radiant dyes;
Prisons their attar in wax;
Candies their petals; denies
Them freedom to breed in their wont;
Buds, fecundates, grafts them at will;
And with cunningest leechcraft compels
 Their good to his ill.

Intrigue fantastic as this
 Where shall we find?
Mute in their beauty they serve him,
 Body and mind.
And one—but a weed in his wheat—
Is the poppy—frail, pallid, whose juice
With its saplike and opiate fume
Strange dreams will induce

Of wonder and horror. And none
 Can silence the soul,
Wearied of self and of life,
 Earth's darkness and dole,
More secretly, deeply. But finally—
 Waste not thy breath;
The words that are scrawled on this phial
 Have for synonym, *death*—

*Walter
de la Mare*

Wicket out into the dark
That swings but one way;
Infinite hush in an ocean of silence
 Aeons away—
Thou forsaken!—even thou!—
 The dread good-bye;
The abandoned, the thronged, the watched,
 the unshared—
 Awaiting me—I!

AFTER FORTY YEARS
(From *The Conway*)

John
Masefield

LET us walk round: the night is dark but fine,
And from the fo'c's'le we shall surely see
The lights of steamers passing to the sea,
And all the city lamp-light, line on line.

There on the flood the trampled trackways shine
With hasting gleamings shaken constantly,
The River is the thing it used to be
Unchanged, unlike those merry mates of mine.

This is the very deck, the wind that blows
Whines in the self-same rigging: surely soon
Eight bells will strike, and to his fading tune
Will come the supper-call from Wally Blair:
And then alive, from all the graves none knows,
Will come the boys we knew, the boys we were.

*Herbert
Palmer*

BLACK MAGIC

SHE spoke ill of me, and falsely,
That witch woman with no weans.
I sent her a cargo of curses
In a ship of dreams.
It went sailing, gleaming and sailing
Over the blue sea
To the spar bar where she sat railing
Of mine and me.

She had mice teeth and an owl's mouth,
That white bitch of the moonbeams;
"Let her stuff it and grow tusks"
Cried I to the tide streams,
"There's tar of coal and henbane
And asp pudding in the hull's hold.
Let her bite them and get pain
And turn grey in her hair's gold."

There went by three weeks,
Three weeks and a day's span;
I was looking polewards to the far creeks,
Putting blessings on my death-plan,
When I saw a ship come sailing
Zig-zag over the blue sea,
Steered by no manly steersman;
And I cried "Lord, hide me!"

*Herbert
Palmer*

For it was my ship, the radiant.
And who do you think was sat there?—
Looking at me more than plainly,
Twining seaweed in her hair,
Twining seaweed and singing,
Proud of all my masts and stings,
Sitting on my cargo, singing,
Whirled about with sea-gulls' wings;
High disdainig, singing, praising,
Sailing in my ship of dreams,
That white bitch of the moonbeams,
That pale woman with no weans.

Herbert
Palmer

THE PASSING OF LORD GREY

WELL, you can see now,
See the trout leap
And the ripples creep,
See the flies gleam
On the shining stream,
See on all sides, see.

Who'd ask for you back?—
Not I, not I,
For the world's on the rack
And there's too much down-sail'd,
And it's hard on the fisher whose eyesight has fail

Where plovers cry
And the hawk swoops fieldwards
You can fill your gaze now.
Where Itchen wanders
The parched grass squanders
Old love ablaze.

And beyond Earth's thunder
New rivers croon
At the back of the moon,
Loosed starwards for you.

Blithely they glide

*Herbert
Palmer*

Through green woods of wonder,
Where the pretty birds sing
"Tiraloo, ching, ching,
O, where are you wayfaring?—
Fisherman, Fate's man,
Fair nobleman, statesman,
Fine bird friend,
True great man."

*John
Drinkwater*

THE FOOL

POOR fool who stood alone,
A-staring at a tree,
Wherein a wild bird sang;
The world with tidings rang,
Of a new world to be;
He stood as any stone
A-staring at a tree.

Honour was everywhere
In action on that day;
Old wrongs were put away,
And envy overthrown
By nations met in prayer,
As sometimes warriors pray;
And he, the poor fool, he
Still stood as any stone
To stare upon a tree.

It was a silly bird,
Piping an idle note,
Unworthy to be heard
By men come to engage
Another golden age;
A foolish bird, who wrote
But green songs in a tree
With but a fool to see,

*John
Drinkwater*

With but a fool to tell
In his own silly word
That such a song was well
When the heroic mind
Was loud among mankind.

Loud upon land and sea
Victorious goodwill
Made music that the scribes
Of honour must record
Upon the utmost hill,
Among the hidden tribes
In forests of the night;
The coming of the lord,
No less, was that decree,
That benison, that light;
And still because a tree
Made lyrics all the day
He stared the time away.
Poor fool, to spend the time
Of honour in a rhyme,
Because a wild bird set
His wisdom in a net.

*Humbert
Wolfe*

THE CYPRIOT

ALL men have said to themselves,
as daylight ended or began
in the long grasses or in the furrow,
as they hunted or took the plough by the helves
"To be a man
is to be aware of sorrow."
Shall I therefore being such, forget thee
Atropos or Norney or whatever name
was thine in service. Shall I not
rather in the place of worship set thee
before the flame—
encircled Cypriot?
For she—the other—still is tidal,
flowing with the morn, and fled
till the gulls cry over the sands.
And he who comes as a groom to the bridal
may twist instead
the winding-sheet in his hands.
But thou to the spindle bending,
as it was planned before the years,
dost lengthen or cut the web.
Let us have done, heart, with pretending
that any tears
can draw the waters homeward when they ebb.

AN ARMFUL OF BRACKEN

*Humbert
Wolfe*

TAKE then an armful of bracken,
two stone-pines, a birch,
and a knoll where the grasses thicken.
There end the search!
There rest awhile and remember
(as you must, as you will)
that it is September
still
with the birch-leaves changing a little,
and the bracken folding the green arms
which the dangerously brittle
sunshine scarce warms.
Clutch so tight to the grass
that it almost cuts, and say:
"This shall not pass
away.
This is sealed to us and we
to it, though the bracken
and the birch-tree
be stricken,
and the grass wither.
Time that plucks all
shall not gather
this small
harvest laid aside
in a world beyond

*Humbert
Wolfe*

the leaf that has died
and the dead frond.”
Yes these,
like a hill-city piled
in the distances
behind the Child
at Mary’s breast, are such
as link earth’s vernal
and hesitating touch
with things eternal.

LOCH LUICHART

*Andrew
Young*

BEN LIATH and Sgurr Mor
Hang in the air in a white chastity
Of cloud and February snow
That less to earth they seem to owe
Than to the pale blue cloud-drift or
The deep blue sky.

Though high and far they stand,
O'er leagues of forest to this water come
Their shadows, to a purer beauty thinned
In this true mirror, now the wind,
That held it with a shaking hand,
Droops still and dumb.

As I push from the shore
And drift (beneath that buzzard) I climb now
These silver hills for miles and miles,
Breaking hard rock to gentle smiles
With the slow motion of my prow
And dripping oar.

*Andrew
Young*

LAST SNOW

ALTHOUGH the snow still lingers
Heaped on the ivy's blunt webbed fingers
And painting tree-trunks on one side,
Here in this sunlit ride
The fresh unchristened things appear,
Leaf, spathe and stem,
With crumbs of earth clinging to them
To show the way they came
But no flower yet to tell their name,
And one green spear
Stabbing a dead leaf from below
Kills winter at a blow.

AN UNVEILING

*Siegfried
Sassoon*

THE President's oration ended thus:
'Not vainly London's War-gassed victims perished.
We are a part of them, and they of us:
As such they will perpetually be cherished.
Not many of them did much; but all did what
They could, who stood like warriors at their post
(Even when too young to walk). This hallowed spot
Commemorates a proud, though poisoned host.
We honour here' (he paused) 'our Million Dead;
Who, as a living poet has nobly said,
"Are now forever London." Our bequest
Is to rebuild, for What-they-died-for's sake,
A bomb-proof roofed Metropolis, and to make
Gas-drill compulsory. *Dulce et decorum est . . .*'

*Edith
Sitwell*

TWO SONGS

I

COME, my Arabia,
 to the senses stilled
With night. Your locks are lilies dark with dew
As with rich myrrh the deepest leaves are chilled.
Plantations of the East have leaves like fire
And the dark night dew lies on them and sighs.
So my Arabia lies
Upon my heart that is our Phoenix pyre
Whence all the splendours of Arabia rise.

II

My desert has a noble sun for heart.
Though Time has changed my amber flesh to sand,
Yet vast horizons knew that desert land,
With seas that heard the siren song. Their chart
Is lost on siren isles; my porphyry veins,
Within whose pulse the sad time waxes, wanes
With all the summer sorrow of the rose,
Are shrunk to sand, no more that bright sea flows.
Yet have I still a noble sun for heart.

*Edwin
Muir*

THE RIDERS

At the dead centre of the boundless plain
Does our way end? Our horses pace and pace
Like steeds for ever labouring on a shield,
Keeping their solitary heraldic courses.

Our horses move on such a ground, for them
Perhaps the progress is all ease and pleasure,
But it is heavy work for us, the riders,
Whose hearts have flown so far ahead they are lost
 Long past all finding
While we sit staring at the same horizon.

Time has such curious stretches, we are told,
And generation after generation
May travel them, sad stationary journey,
Of what device, what meaning?

 Yet these coursers
Have seen all and will see all. Suppliantly
The rocks will melt, the sealed horizons fall
Before their onset—and the places
Our hearts have hid in will be viewed by strangers
Sitting where we are, breathing the foreign air
Of the new realm they have inherited.

But we shall fall here on the plain.

It may be
These steeds would stumble and the long road end
(So legend says) if they should lack their riders.

But then a rider
Is always easy to find. Yet we fill a saddle
At least. We sit where others have sat before us
And others will sit after us.

It cannot be
These animals know their riders, mark the change
When one makes way for another. It cannot be
They know this wintry wilderness from spring.
For they have come from regions dreadful past
All knowledge. They have borne upon their saddles
Forms fiercer than the tiger, borne them calmly
As they bear us now.

And so we do not hope
That their great coal-black glossy hides
Should keep a glimmer of the autumn light
We still remember, when our limbs were weightless
As red leaves on a tree, and our silvery breaths
Went on before us like new-risen souls
Leading our empty bodies through the air.
A princely dream. Now all that golden country

Edwin Is razed as bare as Troy. We cannot return,
Muir And shall not see the kingdom of our heirs.

These beasts are mortal, and we who fall so lightly,
Fall so heavily, are, it is said, immortal.
Such knowledge should armour us against all change,
And this monotony. Yet these worn saddles
Have powers to charm us to obliviousness.
They were appointed for us, and the scent of the
ancient leather
Is strong as a spell. So we must mourn or rejoice
For this our station, our inheritance
As if it were all. This plain all. This journey all.

HERALDRY

*Edwin
Muir*

WHO curbed the lion long ago
And penned him in this towering field
And reared him wingless in the sky?
And quenched the dragon's burning eye,
Chaining him here to make a show,
The faithful guardian of the shield?

A fabulous wave far back in Time
Flung these calm trophies to this shore
That looks out on a different sea.
These relics of a buried war,
Empty as shape and cold as rhyme,
Gaze now on fabulous wars to be.

So well the storm must have fulfilled
Its task of perfect overthrow
That this new world to them must seem
Irrecognizably the same,
And looking from the flag and shield
They see the self-same road they know.

Here now heraldic watch them ride
This path far up the mountain-side
And backward never cast a look;
Ignorant that the dragon died
Long since and that the mountain shook
When the great lion was crucified.

Sylvia
Lynd

A STREET

WHAT fierce pleasure, what fierce pain
Those lovers knew who walked this street;
Oh, what an Eden had it been,
If none but they had walked in it;
A southward slope of sunny green,
All over-arched with springing trees—
Oh, what an Eden had it been
Unpeopled save by these!

A roof of sparkling leaves and boughs
Had netted the benignant plain,
A web of shadows for a house
About their loves had lain;
And idleness their husbandry,
And garnered riches their delight,
And solitude their bolt and key,
And darkness for their walls by night!

THE WORD MADE FLESH?

How often does a man need to see a woman?

Once!

Once is enough, but a second time will confirm if it
be she,

She who will be a fountain of everlasting mystery,
Whose glance escaping hither and thither
Returns to him who troubles her.

This happens rarely when a man is young;
For the lusts of the young are full of universal glad-
ness,

They have no sadness of disillusioning error,
But only earth's madness of thunder
And its fading bright crackle of lightning.

But when a man is old, married, and in despair
Has slept with the bodies of many women,
And many women have attempted him vainly—
Some awakening that hollow echo of lust
Which is the tinkling of the soul like a bell
In the vast emptiness of hell
And nowhere an echo:

Then if he meet a woman whose loveliness
Is young and yet troubled with power,
Of the earth and yet not of the earth, homeless

W. J. Like the beauty of a fallen archangel,
Turner He will find her chained at a distance unavailable.

No light travelling through space-time immeasurabl
Has leapt so great a distance as their eyes;
Naked together their spirits' commingling
Stirs the seed in their genitals—
Like a babe never to be born that leaps up crying,
A voice crying in the wilderness.

The children of the flesh are sweet and fair,
But sweeter and fairer .
Are the children of no flesh but of the spirit,
They are like an ever-living fever
Of the perishable blood,
Driving the dark brood of men and women
Who because of these phantoms cannot come to res
in one another
In the tranquil flood of one God.

For the blood of a man when he is old,
Old and full of power,
Is no longer like the blood of a young man, inflamm-
able,
It is like a serpent and an eagle,
A bull violent and immovable,
And a burning that is without flame or substance
Like the burning of the holy bush
Or the look of Satan.

Terrible is the agony of an old man,
The agony of incommunicable power,
Holding his potency like a rocket that is full of stars
His countenance like the sky
From which neither thunder nor lightning broke
Nor rain fell.

Only the countenance of the moon, tranquil;
The stars like jewels set in everlasting adamant
Transparent as diamond,
Drought, calm, serene, eternal!

The head of Satan is curled
Close, crisp, like the Gorgon;
They are the serpents of the spirit
Curled like the hair of the chaste body,
Emblem of the God who is not creative,
Who has not made the heavens and the earth,
Nor from an Adam of dust
Took that white bone, woman.

'Tis the everlasting youth of an old man
For whom there is no illusion.
Or else she be so far off that if he fly that height unscalable
He shall topple
Into the abyss.

This it is to be excluded from the bliss

W. J. Of the angels of God,
Turner And of the men and women that He made in His im-
age;
The joy of making images in the image of his maker is
not his,
But his are the children of the spirit:
Sweeter and fairer are they than the children of the
flesh,
But they are born solitary
And agony is their making-kiss.

NOSTALGIA

*W.J.
Turner*

As one goes on
It becomes increasingly dark,
The summers are darker-leaved,
The springs rain-clouded,
The days and nights lie closer together,
The years are swept away like husks.

It is raining everywhere.

When the sun shines it is like a ghost returning,
Everywhere there are umbrellas;
Nobody heeds that pale recollection
Gliding over their heads.

In the days of my youth it came as an enchanter:
Everybody threw their hats into the sky,
The flowers burst into colour,
The hills rose billowing in green pavilions,
The streams ran glittering crystal,
The birds carolled gambolling in the air.

I pull my hat over my eyes;
The rain is come for ever,
For ever and ever.

*Osbert
Sitwell*

ON THE COAST OF COROMANDEL

ON the coast of Coromandel
Dance they to the tunes of Handel;
Chorally, that coral coast
Correlates the bone to ghost,
Till word and limb and note seem one,
Blending, binding act to tone.

All day long they point the sandal
On the coast of Coromandel.
Lemon-yellow legs all bare
Pirouette to perqued air
From the first green shoots of morn,
Cool as northern hunting-horn,
Till the nightly tropic wind
With its rough-tongued, grating rind
Shatters the frail spires of spice.
Imaged in the lawns of rice
(Mirror-flat and mirror green
Is that lovely water's sheen)
Saraband and rigadoon
Dance they through the purring noon,
While the lacquered waves expand
Golden dragons on the sand—
Dragons that must, steaming, die
From the hot sun's agony—
When elephants, of royal blood,

*Osbert
Sitwell*

Plod to bed through liliated mud,
Then evening, sweet as any mango,
Bids them do a gay fandango,
Minuet, jig or gavotte.
How they hate the turkey-trot,
The nautch-dance and the highland fling,
Just as they will never sing
Any music save by Handel
On the coast of Coromandel!

West

A CANDLE lit in darkness of black waters,
A candle set in the drifting prow of a boat,
And every tree to itself a separate shape,
Now plummy, now an arch; tossed trees
Still and dishevelled; dishevelled with past growth,
Forgotten storms; left tufted, tortured, sky-rent,
Even now in stillness; stillness on the lake,
Black, reflections pooled, black mirror
Pooling a litten candle, taper of fire;
Pooling the sky, double transparency
Of sky in water, double elements,
Lying like lovers, light above, below;
Taking, from one another, light; a gleaming,
A glow reflected, fathoms deep, leagues high,
Two distances meeting at a film of surface
Thin as a membrane, sheet of surface, fine
Smooth steel; two separates, height and depth,
Able to touch, giving to one another
All their profundity, all their accidents,
—Changeable mood of clouds, permanent stars,—
Like thoughts in the mind hanging a long way off,
Revealed between lovers, friends. Peer in the water
Over the boat's edge; seek the sky's night-heart;
Are they near, are they far, those clouds, those stars
Given, reflected, pooled? are they so close
For a hand to clasp, to lift them, feel their shape,

*V. Sackville-
West*

Explore their reality, take a rough possession?
Oh no! too delicate, too shy for handling,
They tilt at a touch, quiver to other shapes,
Dance away, change, are lost, drowned, scared;
Hands break the mirror, speech's crudity
The surmise, the divining;
Such things so deeply held, so lightly held,
Subtile, imponderable, as stars in water
Or thoughts in another's thoughts.
Are they near, are they far, those stars, that knowledge?
Deep? shallow? solid? rare? The boat drifts on,
And the litten candle single in the prow,
The small, immediate candle in the prow,
Burns brighter in the water than any star.

Hugh THE SKELETON OF THE FUTURE
MacDiarmid (At Lenin's Tomb)

RED granite and black diorite, with the blue
Of the labradorite crystals gleaming like precious
stones
In the light reflected from the snow; and behind
them
The eternal lightning of Lenin's bones.

From ON A RAISED BEACH

*Hugh
MacDiarmid*

"Ah!" you say, "if only one of these stones would move
—Were it only an inch—of its own accord.

This is the resurrection we await,
—The stone rolled away from the tomb of the Lord.

I know there is no weight in infinite space,
No impermeability in infinite time,
But it is as difficult to understand and have patience here
As to know that the sublime

Is theirs no less than ours, no less confined
To men than men's to a few men, the stars of their kind."

(The masses too have begged bread from stones,
From human stones, including themselves,
And only got it, not from their fellow-men
But from stones such as these here—if then.)

Detached intellectuals, not one stone will move,
Not the least of them, not a fraction of an inch. It is not
The reality of life that is hard to know.

It is nearest of all and easiest to grasp,
But you must participate in it to proclaim it.
—I lift a stone; it is the meaning of life I clasp
Which is death, for that is the meaning of death;
How else does any man yet participate

In the life of a stone,
How else can any man yet become
Sufficiently at one with creation, sufficiently alone,
Till as the stone that covers him he lies dumb

Hugh And the stone at the mouth of his grave is not over-
Mac- thrown?
Diarmid —Each of these stones on this raised beach,
Every stone in the world,
Covers infinite death, beyond the reach
Of the dead it hides; and cannot be hurled
Aside yet to let any of them come forth, as love
Once made a stone move
(Though I do not depend on that
My case to prove).
So let us beware of death; the stones will have
Their revenge; we have lost all approach to them,
But soon we shall become as those we have betrayed,
And they will seal us as fast in our graves
As our indifference and ignorance seals them;
But let us not be afraid to die,
No heavier and colder and quieter then,
No more motionless, do stones lie
In death than in life to all men.
It is no more difficult in death than here
—Though slow as the stones the powers develop
To rise from the grave—to get a life worth having;
And in death—unlike life—we lose nothing that is
truly ours.

THE INCOMPATIBLES

*Richard
Church*

If you relent, I am prepared.
I did not know your strength!
How should the waters flow
Back from the marshes where the sun has glared,
Back from their brackish neighbourhood of sea,
Where the foiled plover shrieks above the samphire,
To be recoiled upon their source?
But this you have dared!
You who are water, I who am fire,
Both to our elemental rhythm true,
We might have marred ourselves, grown reconciled,
You to the little flame, I to the rivulet,
Making a hissing marriage of the wild
With the wild! Did you forget
This possibility of impossibles,
The fiery getting of the flood with child,
I fathering, you mothering a god
Green-eyed and cavern-hearted,
Yet with a fiery arrow shod,
And hair amingling, ripple-parted
As water flows, yet crisp as light?

But you, unnatural, have turned away,
Set back the river to the hills;
And the fire dies, the fire stills
Its flames! See how they play,

Richard Incurled like buds about their death.

Church But spare words, spare breath.

Hark to the elegy of birds in the tree

While the light shrinks above, and the waters beneath

Close their mirror.

What has this terror for you, for me?

DUST

*Richard
Church*

CONTRACTED to the compass of my hand
I hold a century of years.
Of that treasure,
Forty I can measure,
Pale skeletons of my experience.
The rest are legendary. I stand
Peering at my palm, and what it bears
Is but the chaff of other men's desires,
Husks of their wheat.
Time seems so long. It is a cheat,
Raging and passing swifter than straw-fires,
Quicker than thought can follow after sense,
Like treachery of water, or like love
That makes the swallows statues as they move.
But love is only treacherous because
Time hurries it with such confusing laws.
Time is to blame, not love;
Time with quicksilver tongue, that mouths
A passing mockery, making old men of youths,
Putting children in the place of lust
And ripening them, and ageing them before
The tottering lovers dare to trust
Such emblems of their passion,
And cudgel still to find some other fashion
More lasting than those children they once bore.
But they cannot. Their fires are but an ember.

Richard Time has blown too swiftly on that flame.

Church Before they know, they find they can't remember,
They and their love are gone without a name,
Interred two generations deep,
Without an answer, but content and calm,
Winnowed by eternal sleep,
And now a legend lying in my palm.

From FISBO

Robert
Nichols

MYSELF when young and ignorant of sin
Was quite the little cultured Mandarin:
My tone was lofty and my collar low;
I ran to rings and ties tied in a bow;
I spoke of stylists with much eloquence
And even more economy of sense;
I praised the bard my fellows had not read
And, without reading, killed their poet dead;
I lunched on MS., dined off a review,
And before Paris knew its mind I knew;
I bent above a score when at a Prom
And read or rather seemed to read therefrom;
I knew two publishers' readers (and their salaries)
And Brown from Phillips in the Leicester Galleries;
I treated academic souls with sneers
And waxed judicious upon "Johns" and "Steers";
I had my attitude wherewith to gloze
My *causerie* on Duncan or Dalcroze;
Music and painting, poetry and dance
Were but a part of my inheritance;
I enlarged on drama and was seldom happier
Than when confounding Gordon Craig with Appia.
Weightier studies—so they seemed but new—
Were not neglected. Science got its due:
I explicated Einstein and enjoyed
A somewhat scandalous success with Freud;

Robert Till—to sum up—by practice I became
Nichols Sufficiently experienced at the game
To find my genius and to form my clique
And denounce both in the accustomed week,
Thus earning right to wear, day out, day in,
The invisible button of the Mandarin
And freely exercise in speech or chat
The privilege of talking through my hat.

A SHORT POEM FOR ARMISTICE DAY

*Herbert
Read*

GATHER or take fierce degree
trim the lamp set out for sea
here we are at the workman's entrance
clock in and shed your eminence

Notwithstanding, work it diverse ways
work it diverse days, multiplying four digestions
here we make artificial flowers
of paper, tin, and metal thread

One eye one leg one arm one lung
a syncopated sick heart beat
the record is not nearly worn
that weaves a background to our work

I have no power, therefore have patience
These flowers have no sweet scent
no lustre in the petal no increase
from fertilizing flies, and bees

No seed they have no seed
their tendrils are of wire and grip
the buttonhole the lip
and never fade

And will not fade though life

Herbert
Read

and lustre go in genuine flowers
and men like flowers are cut
and withered on a stem

And will not fade a year or more
I stuck one in a candlestick
and there it clings about the socket
I have no power, therefore have patience.

SEA CHANTY

*Herbert
Read*

MELVILLE fell
and the albatross
out of the rigging

Edam the moon
all angular else
mast and ropes

a feather fell
a claw
clutched the ladder

slipped
Melville fell
forty fathoms Melville fell

fathoms below the sea level

F. R.
Higgins

MEATH MEN

WHEN soft grass gives the udders comeliness,
Before late milking-time in Meath and Carlow,
Come, Macnamara, in whiskey let us bless
The pastured royalties of Tara.

This is our land; and here no summer mocks
The stony crops we've known in Aran Islands,
Where seas break silence and strip the yellow rock
Of rich top-dressing for lean highlands.

What of those lips, where Connemara sups
The poteen Connacht drips from yeast and barley,
While, Macnamara, we crown our royal cups
With whiskey from the wheats of Tara.

Here, drowned within their dewy deeps of June,
The fields, for graziers, gather evening silver;
And while each isle becomes a bush in tune,
The Boyne flows into airy stillness.

Yet by the weirs, that shiver with dark eels,
Dusk breaks in leaps of light; and salmon-snarers
Are nightly sharing fish in salley creels
That merely seem a dream to Clare-men.

Now in this halfway house my song is set,

*F. R.
Higgins*

So shut your mouth and let me kiss the barmaid;
For Brinsley Macnamara, you dare not forget
The poets and their privileges in Tara.

*Edmund
Blunden*

THE RIPPLE

COMING by the sluices
Where the water
Plays like colts in a spring meadow,
Singing by the sluices
Once was easy;
Summer mornings hardly sang there sooner.

Why so hard now?
Still the bramble
Dips her dancing sprays in the sallying
Silver onset.
Boy's bravado
Laughs below in the water's mimic battle.

Think not any
Age is wisest;
Which among these rills of the morning
Should be elder,
Or more knowing?
Boys and spaniels seem of the same persuasion.

Here in the vaulted
Arch of the packbridge
Light in curls, in stars, in javelins
Dances a play upon
Chance and change, and
Sets my mind again shamelessly playing and dancing.

From AGAMEMNON'S TOMB

Sacheverell

Sitwell

ALL is degradation in the chambers of dead bones,
Nor marble, nor porphyry, but make it worse
For the mind sees, inside it, to the stained wet shroud
Where all else is dry, and only that is fluid,
So are carven tombs in the core to their cool marble,
The hollowed out heart of it, the inner cell,
All is degradation in the halls of the dead;
I never thought other things of death, until
The climb to Mycenae, when the wind and rain
Stormed at the tombs, when the rocks were as clouds
Struck still in the hurricane, driven to the hillside,
And rain poured in torrents, all the air was water.
The wet grey Argolide wept below,
The winds wailed and tore their hair,
The plain of Argos mourned and was in mist,
In mist tossed and shaken, in a sea of wrack;
This was the place of weeping, the day of tears,
As if all the dead were here, in all their pain,
Not stilled, nor assuaged, but aching to the bone:
It was their hell, they had no other hope than this,
But not alone, it was not nothingness:
The wind shrieked, the rain poured, the steep wet stones
Were a cliff in a whirlwind, by a raging sea,
Hidden by the rainstorm pelting down from heaven
To that hollow valley loud with melancholy;
But the dark hill opened. And it was the tomb.

Sacheverell A passage led into it, cut through the hill,
Sitwell Echoing, rebounding with the million-ringing rai
 With walls, ever higher, till the giant lintel
 Of huge stone, jagged and immense, rough-hewn
 That held up the mountain: it was night within:
 Silence and peace, nor sound of wind nor rain,
 But a huge dome, glowing with the day from out
 Let in by the narrow door, diffused by that,
 More like some cavern under ocean's lips,
 Fine and incredible, diminished in its stones,
 For the hand of man had fitted them, of dwindling
 size,
 Row after row, round all the hollow dome,
 As scales of fish, as of the ocean's fins,
 Pinned with bronze flowers that were, now, all fall
 But the stones kept their symmetry, their separate
 shape
 To the dome's high cupola of giant stone:
 All was high and solemn in the cavern tomb:
 If this was death, then death was poetry,
 First architecture of the man-made years,
 This was peace for the accursed Atridae:
 Here lay Agamemnon in a cell beyond,
 A little room of death, behind the solemn dome
 Not burnt, nor confined, but laid upon the soil
 With a golden mask upon his dead man's face
 For a little realm of light within that shadowed room
 And ever the sun came, every day of life,

Though less than starpoint in that starry sky, *Sacheverell*
To the shadowed meridian, and sloped again, *Sitwell*
Nor lit his armour, nor the mask upon his face,
For they burned in eternal night, they smouldered in
it;

Season followed season, there was summer in the
tomb,
Through hidden crevice, down that point of light,
Summer of loud wings and of the ghosts of blossom;
One by one, as harvesters, all heavy laden,
The bees sought their corridor into the dome
With honey of the asphodel, the flower of death,
Or thyme, rain-sodden, and more sweet for that;
Here was their honeycomb, high in the roof,
I heard sweet summer from their drumming wings
Though it wept and rained and was the time of tears;
They made low music, they murmured in the tomb,
As droning nuns through all a shuttered noon,
Who prayed in this place of death, and knew it not.

How sweet such death, with honey from the flowers,
A little air, a little light, and drone of wings,
To long monotony, to prison of the tomb!
But he did not know it. His bones, picked clean,
Were any other bones. The trick is in our mind:
They love not a bed, nor raiment for their bones,
They are happy on cold stone or in the aching water,
And neither care, nor care not, they are only dead.

Sacheverell It once was Agamemnon, and we think him happy:
Sitwell O false, false hope! How empty his happiness,
All for a fine cavern and the hum of bees.

TORIL

Roy
Campbell

C R O W D

Another Bull! Another Bull!

O X

You heard?

B U L L

Your number's up: the people gave the word.
Feasted on flowers, the darling of the days,
To-day I've ghastly asphodels to graze,
Harsh sand to choke, and my own blood to swill,
Whose dewlap loved the golden-rolling rill,
When through the rushes, burnished like its tide,
The lovely cirrus of my thews would slide,
My heart flame-glazing, through the silken skin,
Joy of its mighty furnace lit within.
These crescent horns that scimitared the Moon,
These eyes that were the tinder of the noon—
All now to be cut down, and soon to trail
A sledge of carrion at a horse's tail!

O X

Flame in the flaming noon, I've seen you run.
The Anvil of Toledo's now your Sun,
Whose furious aurora they unfold,
Beyond these gates, a roaring gate of gold;
Whose iron clangs for you, whose dawn you feel,
The target of its burnished ray of steel.

Roy
Campbell

BULL

Ox as you are, what should you know of this
Who never neared the verge of that abyss?

O X

Ox as I am, none better knows than I
Who led your father's father here to die.
Be brave, be patient, and reserve your breath.

BULL

But tell me what is blacker than this death?

O X

My impotence.

BULL

It was your soul that spoke—
More hideous than this martyrdom?

O X

The Yoke!

NURSERY RHYME FOR A TWENTY-FIRST *A. S. J.*
BIRTHDAY *Tessimond*

You cannot see the walls that divide your hand
From his or hers or mine when you think you touch it.

You cannot see the walls because they are glass,
And glass is nothing until you try to pass it.

Beat on it if you like, but not too hard,
For glass will break you even while you break it.

Shout—and the sound will be broken and driven back-
wards,
For glass, though clear as water, is deaf as granite.

This fraudulent inhibition is cunning; wise men
Content themselves with breathing patterns on it.

A. S. J.

UNLYRIC LOVE SONG

Tessimond

It is time to give that-of-myself which I could not at
first:

To offer you now at last my least and my worst:

Minor, absurd preserves,

The shell's end-curves,

A document kept at the back of a drawer,

A tin hidden under the floor,

Recalcitrant prides and hesitations:

To pile them carefully in a desperate oblation

And say to you 'quickly! turn them

Once over and burn them'.

Now I (no communist, heaven knows!

Who have kept as my dearest right to close

My tenth door after I've opened nine to the world,

To unfold nine sepals holding one hard-furled)

Shall—or shall try to—offer to you

A communism of two . . .

See, entry's yours;

Here, the last door!

POEM IN DEDICATION

AND new simplicity is mine—
Mine as a sunrise, summer Alpine morning, came
Through feathery rising puffball,
 urging, bringing
Amber and flame to the mountain,
 surging, flinging
High on the silent wind, resilient mist,
 ranging, revealing,
Superb white pyramid, black rock-arête,
Past the striated bergschrund, and below
The slow unyielding traverse and the exposed descent,
 the ledge
Where I (or was it I?) remember,
Under green Vega shivering,
 grasping, testing
Flake and uncertain crevice,
 wavering, trusting
Skill in the quivering muscle,
 slipping, straining,
Gaining new hand- and foothold,
 resting, rising,
Probing the dark, the easier danger,
 jumping,
 running
Down the last gully and the final scree,
Down to resounding water, dank

Michael Moss, and the firm at-last God-given ground
Roberts How sleeping
Sound under crag and boulder.
Aching, sleeping
Then
To a sudden change of rhythm, waking,
rinsing
Eyes in the glacier torrent, munching
Bread; and remembering failure, laughing; living,
planning the new direct ascent—
resolving, scanning, watching
Chance upon chance assemble, hope
Grow to a step substantial, trace
The untrodden route, not easy, quick to reward a slip,
but O,
The last thin cloud dissolving,
certain now
As the wide earth, and sound of water, and the sun's
Touch, and the light, the London air,
Bright in untrammelled daybreak, bring your name.

A PRISON FOR SALE

*William
Plomer*

THE by-pass motorist turns his head,
And the hiking girl, with a hump on her back,
A wondering eye.

Out in the fields an abbey of crime,
A ruin, where penance was long a cult—
A prison for sale.

Like a damaged hive it dries in the sun,
The galleried cells like broken combs
Against the blue.

Like a monk at prayer, or a bee at work
Filling each hexagon up, so here
The prisoner lived;

The heart's obsessions, heather-sweet,
From a rough life's small hardy flowers
He too distilled;

In the multicellular eye of his mind
Some constant image was multiplied,
The honey of hope.

No doubt this ancient monument

*William
Plomer*

(Unsuitable for hotel or school
Or anything else)

Will soon be bought to be broken up—
And nobody will point and stare
At the cloister-combs,

Hiker and motorist hurrying on
To similar crimes, and a diet of dreams
In separate cells.

THE DEVIL-DANCERS

*William
Plomer*

In shantung suits we whites are cool,
Glasses and helmets censoring the glare;
Fever has made our anxious faces pale,
We stoop a little from the loads we bear;

Grouped in the shadow of the compound wall
We get our cameras ready, sitting pensive;
Keeping our distance and our dignity
We talk and smile, though slightly apprehensive.

The heat strikes upward from the ground,
The ground the natives harden with their feet,
The flag is drooping from its bamboo pole,
The middle distance wavers in the heat.

Naked or gaudy, all agog the crowd
Buzzes and glistens in the sun; the sight
Dazzles the retina; we remark the smell,
The drums beginning, and the vibrant light.

Now the edge of the jungle rustles. In a hush
The crowd parts. Nothing happens. Then
The dancers totter adroitly out on stilts,
Weirdly advancing, twice as high as men.

Sure as fate, strange as the mantis, cruel

William As vengeance in a dream, four bodies hung
Plomer In cloaks of rasping grasses, turning
Their tiny heads, the masks besmeared with dung;

Each mops and mows, uttering no sound,
Each stately, awkward, giant marionette;
Each printed shadow frightful on the ground
Moving in small distorted silhouette;

The fretful pipes and thinly-crying strings,
The mounting expectation of the drums
Excite the nerves, and stretch the muscles taut
Against the climax, but it never comes;

It never comes because the dance must end
And very soon the dancers will be dead;
We catch the air-mail to-morrow; how
Can ever these messages by us be read?

These bodies hung with viscera and horns
Move with an incomparable lightness,
And through the masks that run with bullock's bloc
Quick eyes look out, dots of fanatic brightness.

Within the mask the face, and moulded
(As mask to face) within the face the ghost,
As in its chrysalis-case the foetus folded
Of leaf-light butterfly. What matters most

When it comes out and we admire its wings
Is to remember where its life began:
Let us take care—that flake of flame may be
The butterfly whose bite can kill a man.

*William
Plomer*

C. Day
Lewis

A TIME TO DANCE

FOR those who had the power
of the forest fires that burn
Leaving their source in ashes
to flush the sky with fire:
Those whom a famous urn
could not contain, whose passion
Brimmed over the deep grave
and dazzled epitaphs;
For all that have earned us wings
to clear the tops of grief
My friend who within me laughs
bids you dance and sing.

Some set out to explore
earth's limit, and little they recked if
Never their feet came near it,
outgrowing the need for glory:
Some aimed at a small objective
but the fierce updraught of their spirit
Forced them to the stars.
Are honoured in public, who built
The dam that tamed a river;
or holding the salient for hours
Against odds, cut off and killed,
are remembered by one survivor.

*C. Day
Lewis*

All these: but most for those
 whom accident made great,
As a radiant chance encounter
 of cloud and sunlight grows
Immortal on the heart:
 whose gift was the sudden bounty
Of a passing moment, enriches
 the fulfilled eye for ever.
Their spirits float serene
 above time's roughest reaches,
But their seed is in us, and over
 our lives they are evergreen.

C. Day
Lewis

THE CONFLICT

I SANG as one
Who on a tilting deck sings
To keep their courage up, though the wave hangs
That shall cut off their sun.

As storm-cocks sing
Flinging their natural answer in the wind's teeth,
And care not if it is waste of breath
Or birth-carol of spring.

As ocean-flyer clings
To height, to the last drop of spirit driving on
While yet ahead is land to be won
And work for wings.

Singing I was at peace,
Above the clouds, outside the ring:
For sorrow finds a swift release in song
And pride its poise.

Yet living here
As one between two massing powers I live,
Whom neutrality cannot save
Nor occupation cheer.

None such shall be left alive:

*C. Day
Lewis*

The innocent wing is soon shot down,
And private stars fade in the blood-red dawn
Where two worlds strive.

The red advance of life
Contracts pride, calls out the common blood,
Beats song into a single blade,
Makes a depth-charge of grief.

Move then with new desires;
For where we used to build and love
Is no man's land, and only ghosts can live
Between two fires.

C. Day
Lewis

SONNET

THIS man was strong, and like a sea-cape parted
The tides; there were not continents enough
For all his fledged ambitions; the hard-hearted
Mountains were moved by his explosive love:
Was young; yet between island and island
Laid living cable and whispered over seas;
When he sang, our feathery woods fell silent;
His smile put the fidgeting hours at ease.
See him now, a cliff chalk-faced and crumbling,
Eyes like craters of volcanoes dead;
A miser with the tarnished minutes fumbling;
A queasy traveller from board to bed:
The voice that charmed spirits grown insane
As the bark of a dog at the end of a dark lane.

FANFARE

*Hugh Gordon
Porteus*

At dawn the cock struts:
unlocks the morning, in
 hedge, field and farm.

Wind shakes the sun's locks
free, skims curdled skies
 and turns day's churn.

Birds bagpipe, bugle, wind a horn
mere campion-size, but sun
 brings trumpets warm

To bray both bee and man
back slick to factories where
 day's fugue is done.

Drunk with machinery, all fall,
heel, follow, reel to the rhythm of earth's
 diurnal turn.

Tree bird and bee, each can teach only each
predestined arabesques
 men slowly learn.

Hugh Gordon
Porteus

MIGRATION

TEN hundred drums make roll, behind the hills,
Forward, for a war of wind—
the first breath
driving the pine smells.

Close battling in topmasts, and thin
Tray-crash of metalfoil, shiver and bend—
the first blow
thudding the heath.

Roots clenched in fear, this herd will never stampede
But shudder and whimper as
a thousand needles spill
to the sunk plinth beneath.

In the new temperature,
And through the ensuing darkness, the stars being
blind
Whispering, in formation come
the red ants
and the blacks ant
and the white ants.

INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE DINNER

*Ronald
Bottrall*

JAMES, we will have my Protean head
Served as the focal point of the meal, so see
To it that the eyes are glazed expertly into a pair
Of reflectors. Take steps to prevent our guests from
Handling the spoons: concavity
Distorts, and an uncensored version of a man
Up-ends his hard-bought complacency.
Next, shred my identity, mincing it into marzipan
Calligrammes of unexpectedly bizarre patterns.
When I move to greet the in-comers they will be
Equipped with the same faces as I and Barlow
And Harlow. Ice-blue hands propping up
Death-cold faces, faces often half dropping
Away, frayed and mortified, but still
Applauding, still politely murmuring
"Give!" while Antarctic drifts
Close in on the table-cloth. My manly privacies
Will, of course, be masticated along with the salted
Almonds, turned over by tongues and
Duly pondered. But then, James, we must not
Let our guests laugh to that point where they may spill
The laborious clippings from yesterday's
Afternoon; they must not turn
The conversation away from the races, from Dufy
And from Nangganangga, back to this I,
This indeterminate I, leaving the integration

*Ronald
Bottrall*

Quite problematical. Finally, James, let
Us go and anticipate the night
By putting on the day's corruption, for
Thou art Caesar (the insurance is paid
And the seal set) and I am Caesar's Brutus.

ON A GRAVE OF THE DROWNED

*Ronald
Bottrall*

THEY whittle their life-stick who go
Down to the threshing jaws. Goodbye
To the smutty lamp, goodbyes are hoarse,
Disused. 'Draw the last pint!' There in the
Oil-black bay the muttering nets, a gale
Blowing against the wet finger. Gull once a
W pencilled against the gray, now
Dismantled, maimed, and set upon by friends:
Beaten off by bloody beaks, crunched feathers
Strike the shale ledges, wearily take
The backward, forward of the foam.

These went the watery bridge to know
Or numb, insurgent; on thole-pins spent
The dizzy creak of racked sinews and
Stalled with a thew-thrust, whipcord taut,
Jarring alarms of singing drowsiness.
Then glaucous eyes crammed full.

Above that mounded tale of many,
Disintegrated one, a beacon autumn tree
Irradiated from within swirls
Outward in eddies of russet light.

Nor locus if you will but envelope,
Paths of light not atoms of good form;
Such tangent praise, less crashing, not less warm,
May gain more intimacy for less hope.

Not the enclosed letter then, the spirited air,
The detached marble, not the discovered face;
I may praise so for truth as still for grace
The humility that will not hear or care.

You are a metaphor and they are lies
Or there true least where their knot chance unfurls;
You are the grit only of those glanced pearls
No acid now will melt back to small eyes.

Wide-grasping glass in which to gaze alone
Your curve bars even fancy from its gates;
You are the map only of the divine states
You, made, nor known, nor knowing in, make
known.

★ ★ ★

Yet if I love you but as cause unknown
Cause has at least the form that it has shown;
Or love what you imply but to exclude,
That vacuum has your edge, your attitude.

W. Empson

Duality too has its Principal;
These lines you grant me may invert to points;
Or paired, poor grazing misses, at your joints,
Cross you on painless arrows to the wall.

W. H.
Auden

THREE POEMS

I

To ask the hard question is simple;
Asking at meeting
With the simple glance of acquaintance
To what these go
And how these do:
To ask the hard question is simple,
The simple act of the confused will.

But the answer
Is hard and hard to remember:
On steps or on shore
The ears listening
To words at meeting,
The eyes looking
At the hands helping,
Are never sure
Of what they learn
From how these things are done.
And forgetting to listen or see
Makes forgetting easy:
Only remembering the method of remembering,
Remembering only in another way,
Only the strangely exciting lie,
Afraid
To remember what the fish ignored,

*W. H.
Auden*

How the bird escaped, or if the sheep obeyed.

Till, losing memory,
Bird, fish, and sheep are ghostly,
And ghosts must do again
What gives them pain.
Cowardice cries
For windy skies,
Coldness for water,
Obedience for a master.

Shall memory restore
The steps and the shore,
The face and the meeting place;
Shall the bird live,
Shall the fish dive,
And sheep obey
In a sheep's way;
Can love remember
The question and the answer,
For love recover
What has been dark and rich and warm all over?

Hearing of harvest rotting in the valleys,
Seeing at end of street the barren mountains,
Round corners coming suddenly on water,
Knowing them shipwrecked who were launched for
 islands,
We honour founders of these starving cities,
Whose honour is the image of our sorrow.

Which cannot see its likeness in their sorrow
That brought them desperate to the brink of valleys;
Dreaming of evening walks through learned cities,
They reined their violent horses on the mountains,
Those fields like ships to castaways on islands,
Visions of green to them who craved for water.

They built by rivers and at night the water
Running past windows comforted their sorrow;
Each in his little bed conceived of islands
Where every day was dancing in the valleys
And all the year trees blossomed on the mountains,
Where love was innocent, being far from cities.

But dawn came back and they were still in cities;
No marvellous creature rose up from the water,
There was still gold and silver in the mountains,
And hunger was a more immediate sorrow;

*W. H.
Auden*

Although to moping villagers in valleys
Some waving pilgrims were describing islands.

‘The gods’, they promised, ‘visit us from islands,
Are stalking head-up, lovely through the cities;
Now is the time to leave your wretched valleys
And sail with them across the lime-green water,
Sitting at their white sides, forget your sorrow,
The shadow cast across your lives by mountains.’

So many, doubtful, perished in the mountains
Climbing up crags to get a view of islands;
So many, fearful, took with them their sorrow
Which stayed them when they reached unhappy
cities;
So many, careless, dived and drowned in water;
So many, wretched, would not leave their valleys.

It is the sorrow; shall it melt? Ah, water
Would gush, flush, green these mountains and these
valleys,
And we rebuild our cities, not dream of islands.

OUR hunting fathers told the story
Of the sadness of the creatures,
Pitied the limits and the lack
Set in their finished features;
Saw in the lion's intolerant look,
Behind the quarry's dying glare
Love raging for the personal glory
That reason's gift would add,
The liberal appetite and power,
The rightness of a god.

Who nurtured in that fine tradition
Predicted the result,
Guessed Love by nature suited to
The intricate ways of guilt;
That human company could so
His southern gestures modify
And make it his mature ambition
To think no thought but ours,
To hunger, work illegally,
And be anonymous?

CRIMEA RED

*John
Lehmann*

THEIR masses whiten the shore,
As the green-splashed blue water turns to rose
And Ai-Petri creeps over the sun,—
Tatars and Russians, Mongols, Turks,
Twirling Spring flowers through the twilight,
Rippling out laughter, ease.

Their singing rises
As the smoke of the mountain fire,
From the balconies of white villas
Like sculptured blooms among the cypress-groves
Their fathers built for half-savage princes
Day-dreaming of culture.

They have come
From the factories of Moscow and Siberia,
The machine stamping and molten metal
The swelling womb of their world,
From the farms they till in common
Those giant steppes of the North Caucasus,
To this coast of vineyards and roses
To the pine-sweet clinics and palace rest-homes
Breathing the sea.

In the new phase of history,
After the years of the enemy warships

*John
Lehmann*

And their brothers hurled from these rocks,
After the first epic of creation
They are taking their ease,
Laughing with flowers from white balconies
Streaming in white by the shore,
Free at last of their father's achievement
Their hands will shape for strength to come,
In tomorrow's sun returning
To roaring wheel and workshop and red harvest.

THE TRENCH

*John
Lehmann*

YEARS passed for him like movements of a spade
Digging a deeper trench than gaped before,
And he the driven coolie sweating made
Himself the captive. Once he travelled roads
That led to apple cheeks and lovers' shade
And roads to parliaments, the roar of crowds,
A news reel name and certain voice obeyed
By millions mesmerised. But always fear
In the last mile assaulted, and displayed
The sudden trench to trap him: just so far
Each time he stepped, no further, though he prayed
For heart to leap with all the quacks and creeds,
Frustrated on the hither side he stayed.

Louis
MacNeice

AN APRIL MANIFESTO

OUR April must replenish the delightful wells,
Bucket's lip dipping, light on the sleeping cells,
Man from his vigil in the wintry chapel
Will card his skin with accurate strigil.
O frivolous and astringent spring
We never come full circle, never remember
Self behind self years without number,
A series of dwindling mirrors, but take a tangent line
And start again. Our April must replenish
Our bank-account of vanity and give our doors a coat
of varnish.

Leave the tedium of audits and of finding correct
For the gaiety of places where people collect
For the paper rosettes of the stadium and the plaudits.
And you, let you paint your face and sleek your leg
with silk

Which is your right to do
As gay trams run on rails and cows give milk.
Sharp sun-strop, surface-gloss, and momentary cap-
rice

These are what we cherish
Caring not if the bridges and the embankments
Of past and future perish and cease:
Before the leaves grow heavy and the good days vanish
Hold out your glasses which our April must replenish.

THE INDIVIDUALIST SPEAKS



WE with our Fair pitched among the feathery clover
Are always cowardly and never sober
Drunk with steam-organs thigh-rub and cream-soda
—We cannot remember enemies in this valley.

As chestnut candles turn to conkers, so we
Knock our brains together extravagantly
Instead of planting them to make more trees
—Who have not as yet sampled God's malice.

But to us urchins playing with paint and filth
A prophet scanning the road on the hither hills
Might utter the old warning of the old sin
—A venging youth threatening an old war.

Crawling down like lava or termites
Nothing seduces nothing dissolves nothing affrights
You who scale off masks and smash the purple lights
—But I will escape, with my dog, on the far side of
the Fair.

Louis
MacNeice

SPRINGPIECE

THE small householder now comes out warily
Afraid of the barrage of sun that shouts cheerily,
Spring is massing forces, birds wink in air,
The battlemented chestnuts volley green fire,
The pigeons banking on the wind, the hoots of cars,
Stir him to run wild, gamble on horses, buy cigars;
Joy lies before him to be ladled and lapped from his
hand—

Only that behind him, in the shade of his villa, mem-
ories stand

Breathing on his neck and muttering that all this has
happened before,

Keep the wind out, cast no clout, try no unwarranted
jaunts untried before,

But let the spring slide by nor think to board its car
For it rides West to where the tangles of scrap-iron
are;

Do not walk, these voices say, between the bucking
clouds alone

Or you may loiter into a suddenly howling crater, or
fall, jerked back, garrotted by the sun.

SOWING SAND

*Julian
Bell*

Abstinence sows sand all over,
And recommends a medicinal lover,
And gives the obvious good advice
To ask and take;
And not to be over nice,
Nor trouble for a mistake.

But within—dry chokes the sand,
And crumbling sinews cannot support,
And flesh cannot understand
That panic sport.

And dead and dead lie
The soft, the tendril curled,
Filaments of sensuous life,
The inner touch to the outer world.

And dead and dead lie
The blazing music's flame,
The storm's intensity
That once unsummoned came.

Oh life, which when I held
I valued scarce a jot,
Now that the times withhold
That absence fogs ev'n through.

Julian
Bell

The laughing heat, the delight,
The strong limbs caress,
Love alive in the night,
Now all emptiness.

THE REDSHANKS

*Julian
Bell*

DRIVE on, sharp wings, and cry above
Not contemplating life or love
Or war or death: a winter flight
Impartial to our human plight.

I below shall still remain
On solid earth, with fear and pain,
Doubt, and act, and nervous strive,
As best I may, to keep alive.

What useless dream, a hope to sail
Down the wide, transparent gale,
Until, insentient, I shall be
As gaseous a transparency.

What useless dream, a hope to wring
Comfort from a migrant wing:
Human or beast, before us set
The incommunicable net.

Parallel, yet separate,
The languages we mistranslate,
And knowledge seems no less absurd
If of a mistress, or a bird.

*Stephen
Spender*

THE SHAPES OF DEATH

SHAPES of death haunt life
Neurosis eclipsing each in special shadow:
Unrequited love not solving
One's need to become another's body
Wears black invisibility:
The greed for property
Heaps a skyscraper over the breathing ribs:
The speedlines of dictators
Cut their own stalks:
From afar we watch the best of us—
Whose adored desire was to die for the world.

Ambition is my death. That flat thin flame
I feed, that plants my shadow. This prevents love
And offers love of being loved or loving.
The humorous self-forgetful drunkenness
It hates, demands the slavish pyramids
Be built. Who can prevent
His death's industry, which when he sleeps
Throws up its towers? And conceals in slackness
The dreams of revolution, the birth of death?

Also the swallows by autumnal instinct
Comfort us with their effortless exhaustion
In great unguided flight to their complete South.
There on my fancied pyramids they lodge

*Stephen
Spender*

But for delight, their whole compulsion.
Not teaching me to love, but soothing my eyes;
Not saving me from death, but saving me for speech.

*Stephen
Spender*

PERHAPS

THE explosion of a bomb
the submarine—a burst bubble filled with water—
the chancellor clutching his shot arm (and that was
Perhaps a put-up job for their own photographers)
the parliament their own side set afire
& then our party forbidden
& the mine flooded, an accident I hope

motorcycles wires aeroplanes cars trains
converging at that one town Geneva
top-hats talking at edge of crystal healing lake
then mountains

we know this from rotating machines
from flanges stamping, cutting, sicking out sheets
from paper rolls.

The newsmen run like points of compass: their arms
are
gusts that carry sheets of mouldy paper:
our eyes mud those scraps rub on.

In his skidding car he wonders
when watching landscape attack him
“is it rushing (I cannot grasp it) or is it
at rest with its own silence I cannot touch?”

*Stephen
Spender*

Was that final when they shot him? did that war
lop our dead branches? are my new leaves splendid?
is it leviathan, that revolution
hugely nosing at edge of antarctic?

only Perhaps. Can be that we grow smaller
donnish and bony shut in our racing prison:
headlines are walls that shake and close
the dry dice rattled in their wooden box.

Can be deception of things only changing. Out there
perhaps growth of humanity above the plain
hangs: not the timed explosion, oh but Time
monstrous with stillness like the himalayan range.

*Stephen
Spender*

NEW YEAR

HERE at the centre of the turning year,
The turning Polar North,
The frozen streets and the black fiery joy
Of the Child launched again forth,
I ask that all the years and years
Of future disappointment, like a snow
Chide me at one fall now.

I leave him who burns endlessly
In the brandy pudding crowned with holly,
And I ask that Time should freeze my skin
And all my fellow travellers harden
Who are not flattered by this town
Nor up its twenty storeys whirled
To prostitutes without infection.

Cloak us in accidents and in the failure
Of the high altar and marital adventure;
In family disgrace, denunciation
Of bankers, a premier's assassination.
From the government windows
Let heads of headlines watch depart,
Strangely depart by staying, those
Who build a new world in their heart.

Where scythe shall curve but not upon our neck

*Stephen
Spender*

And lovers proceed to their forgetting work
Answering the harvests of obliteration:
After the frozen years and streets
Our tempered Will shall plough across the nations.
This happy train that punishes no valley,
This hand that moves to make the silent lines,
Create their beauty without robbery.

*John
Pudney*

FIRST DRUMS HEARD

How will I hold myself
how will I keep my stance
now at the frontier of commonsense
now I am faced about
to meet my chance?

Is it much easier
to hold on with one's fear,
to grip a rifle in the frightened air,
crouched on the knees
to wait the word to fire?

Would it be better thus
with little more explained
than where artillery is being trained,
how to put on a mask
if gas is in the wind?

It would be simple surely,
hero in all opinions,
to accept discipline in the battalions
safe in the company
of fearing millions?

How will I stand apart
how will I keep my stance

*John
Pudney*

in the dark crisis of the present tense
when I am face to face
with every chance?

*John
Pudney*

THERE MUST BE EQUAL JOY

Now smoky sky distils,
in the sharpened evening,
visions we have
of a millennium
while we talk
walking into the ambush of the night.

Speak of our ancestors
in this new quietus
closed about us,
in this diminishing
of the world
folding our thoughts to ourselves, our lives.

Call upon time to stop:
or reaching the summit
hill of the night
by stumbling pathway
and unusual gradient
call on love.

The far down slopes repeat
this yearly promise
of those our blood
who, loving, have pledged us
silencing ever

*John
Pudney*

the grating wheel on wheel of earth and sky.

Hold out no hands to spring,
to the adolescent.
This is no carnival
that we tread,
no frolic of resurgent noisy blood.

There must be equal joy:
and such content as two,
as, hand in hand,
two on awakening from their love
behold the orderly daylight arched above.

Randall
Swingler

‘KAMERADSCHAFT’

WHEN you are blind with comfort to your soul's
Essential debit of blood and bone,
May this thought wake your nerves and needle
 through
Your inactivity; of bodies like your own,
Red in a counterfeit morning, with a sheen of sweat
Like metal, and the whole
Earth ominous over them, never forgetting
The ghosts of tappings in the long galleries
Hopelessly blocked and no one to come: of cries
Hungering through emptiness: and bridges won
To that other country, built with bloodletting
And steel imperishable; and never known.

THIS LATE YEAR

*Randall
Swingler*

WAKE then this late
Year, mind of man.
No longer lying anticipate
The difficult arising.
Stiff in your brocaded snow
Is it surprising
If prisoner thought is slow
In stretching, in realising
His open field of force?
Sleep's an intolerant warden
Through whom no whispers pass
Day's new compelling word:
And you now, long estranged
From native influence,
Will wake with the warning dream
Fearing to seem absurd,
Years out of date.
But this is your time, for love's creative
Pulse no longer allows
Recoil from the chilly morning.
Even the pains of growing
Show you alive. The sharpening sense of danger
Works for our change
Deeper than dynamite.
And solitude itself's a tower
To forge the unit of our truth, equal

Randall
Swingler

To gannet's vertical plunge
And poise of power.
All chances that you fear
Are but recoils of the inert tide
Which every spring's
Unstayable career
Must drive, must override,
Cyclone and the jealous cud,
The break-up of the ice
Around their self-regard. What price
The sowing
In the hard year the strand
Of a long wasted shore,
To redeem a dead land
For an impartial glory.

WINTER SPECULATION

*J. M.
Reeves*

WE have travelled to a new country,
A region of hills
Where the sky is a frosted glass
Splintered with branches.
Winter piles up against the window ledges
And in our hearts the drifts deepen.
We are in a new country
And estranged.

Were you to die here,
Being delicate—
Were you to die after a season
And winter to surrender the hilltops finally,
Would not the whiteness melt from our hearts
And the rivers break
And I be left
Alone in the sunlight in a new country?

Hereabouts they tell me
Winter is long months,
Almost to forgetting spring.

*Richard
Goodman*

FROM A DIARY, 1933

WORLD

where eye is hungry
and silence angry
and laughter walled

Age

where none excel
and joy's exile
and sorrow huge

War

wounding of wood
and murder in mud
and youth on wire

and lives

strangled by fear
and strange to fire
to April leaves

INVOCATION

*Rayner
Heppenstall*

Be to my vision
A word coiled on air by the air's gesture
Whose lost fabric is warrant of permanence.

Be to my hearing
A tongue of music offering recompense
By so much as it peels from spirit's vesture.

Come upon my presence
Like dew-point valiance of all human flesh
And upon my remembrance
Like winter sun that lies in cold's meshes
As a dust of benediction.

Take no thought
For how your body shall seem, nor care what thing
Your mouth or hand shall say. But know me for one
Who stands before you shedding the smutched
world's honour.

Martin

THROUGH THE DOOR

Robertson

I STEPPED out of my thoughts
And saw the grass road, straight between dark hedges
Patch-worked with green and grey
And flecked with white of large convolvulus, caught
Among blackberry flowers with torn edges
And honeysuckle drooping antlered sprays
Pink, gold and white, sweetening the light stillness
By bird-notes pierced but not dispersed,
While easy coolness
Lay soft against my skin.
'Why are we always thinking
Since being is so pleasant?'
I thought, and the door closed as I stepped in.

LOSS

*Charles
Madge*

LIKE the dark germs across the filter clean
So in the clear day of a thousand years
This dusty cloud is creeping to our eyes,

Here, as we grow, and are as we have been
Or living give for life some morning tears
The flowering hour bent and unconscious lies.

As in Vienna now, the wounded walls
Silently speak, as deep in Austria
The battered shape of man is without shade

So, time in metaphor, tomorrow falls
On Europe, Asia and America,
And houses vanish, even as they were made,

For yesterday is always sad, its nature
Darker than love would wish in every feature.

Charles
Madge

THOUGHTS OF AN OUTPOST

PREPARE for silence and for being closed.
The order of outspoken fate is final.
Causes are ready for their heartless march.
The kind is shut in cages of the mind.
Under a cloud of vapour, towers fall.
Howitzers are involved in seas of mud.
Camps blow like leaves beneath a leaning tree.
Crouched native sits infantile destiny.
Years form themselves into a living arch.
Machines have second-life becoming spinal.
Teeth without jaws are seen on circles blind.
Biology is dry, no spring, no blood.
Long put to sleep the human has reposed.
There is a sense of stillness above all.

THE LEAPING LAUGHERS

*George
Barker*

WHEN will men again
Lift irresistible fists
 Not bend from ends
 But each man lift men
Nearer again.

Many men mean
Well: but tall walls
 Impede, their hands bleed and
 They fall, their seed the
Seed of the fallen.

See here the fallen
Stooping over stones over their
 Own bones: but all
 Stooping doom-beaten.

Whom the noonday washes
Whole, whom the heavens compel
 And to whom pass immaculate messages,
 How soon will men again
 Lift irresistible fists
 Impede impediments
Leap mountains, laugh at walls?

*George
Barker*

From ELEGY ANTICIPATING DEATH

WITHIN abysmal catacombs lie
Branches of flame in darker trees,
The figures of preceded I.

As I under wander, these
Forms which crouch in alcoves
Clasping their cadaverous knees,

Glare down on me. Their eyes are mauves.
Their brows emanate a shade
Like lightless moons or murdered doves:

I wander through as through glade
On glade of glass repeating my I;
I continue, being unafraid

For they are nothing other than am I
Nor I, than they; as though I went
Along the sepulchral gallery

Of death's museum, I present
Reflections of myself in cases
Redoubled by the true content.

They loom down with avid faces
These figures whose flesh is appetite,

*George
Barker*

Hungering for the air's breathing and being spaces,

But covertly resigned to their night.
I am acquainted profoundly with each,
Figure by figure they indite

The mortal lesson the muscles teach;
Form by form, circumscribe
The limits the limbs can reach.

To run, to leap, to spring and stride,
This figure with its members fixed
Geometry to undo my pride:

Another with its eyeballs taxed
Insanely stares at absences
But finds each eyeball has been boxed:

A third in speaking knows it says
No sound; a fourth chews air; and another's
Loins lack love's artifices.

Numberless countenances all brothers
To mine confront me at each turn
So that I am dead in the death of others

*George
Barker*

Yet all are myself; here they learn
The ossified restrictions I
Forsee must make my spirit burn

Only the more intense, when the soul-racks die
Not to loose dust but to the icy
Pain of bone laid immovably.

LIGHT

*Dylan
Thomas*

LIGHT breaks where no sun shines;
Where no sea runs, the waters of the heart
Push in their tides;
And, broken ghosts with glow-worms in their heads,
The things of light
File through the flesh where no flesh decks the bones.

A candle in the thighs
Warms youth and seed and burns the seeds of age;
Where no seed stirs,
The fruit of man unwrinkles in the stars,
Bright as a fig;
Where no wax is, the candle shows its hairs.

Dawn breaks behind the eyes;
From poles of skull and toe the windy blood
Slides like a sea;
Nor fenced nor staked, the gushers of the sky
Spout to the rod
Divining in a smile the oil of tears.

Night in the sockets rounds,
Like some pitch moon, the limit of the globes;
Day lights the bone;
Where no cold is, the skinning gales unpin
The winter's robes;

Dylan The film of spring is hanging from the lids.
Thomas

Light breaks on secret lots,
On tips of thought where thoughts smell in the rain;
When logics die,
The secret of the soil grows through the eye,
And blood jumps in the sun;
Above the waste allotments the dawn halts.

OBSERVE YOURSELF

*Clifford
Dyment*

OBSERVE yourself, peer into instruments,
Watch if the needle flickers, sensitive
To each minute vibration from without.
Wise captain reads his gauges, static point
Or nervous one will crystallise in deed.

Delicate troubled needle makes alarm,
Means that the world's rude fingers will explore,
Bring blood to tenderness with bitter stress
And penetrate the womb's soft secrecy
Where your own self, your infant art is born.

Needle betrays the unsuspected breach
That will give entry to malignant force
Urgent to probe, to rape, to trespass peace,
Driving the haunted you into escape
As seagull flies horizon over sea.

Clifford
Dyment

SCULPTURE

AN early view of stone is safe from eyes
Seeking an evening's theme. A private grief
Floats unseen threads, quick telegraphs, that flash
Our code from him, whose bust this is, to us.
Here is no duplicate, no rendering
Of universal state, the characters
Of this man's features, chin and lips and eyes,
Are unambiguous stone signatures.

There is life's exercise in this white stone,
Engraved in line indelible, our friend's
Bright forgings of his thought, his glowing tools.
Publicly broken soon, our sympathy
Signals his anguish as he looks within
His nude live cell, the unique crucible.

LANDSCAPE

*David
Gascoyne*

ACROSS the correct perspective to the painted sky
Scores of reflected bridges merging
One into the other pass, and crowds with flags
Rush over them, and clouds like acrobats
Swing on an invisible trapeze.

The light like a sharpened pencil
Writes histories of darkness on the wall,
While walls fall inwards, septic wounds
Burst open like sewn mouths, and rain
Eternally descends through planetary space.

We ask: Whence comes this light?
Whence comes the rain, the planetary
Silences, these aqueous monograms
Of our unique and isolated selves?
Only a dusty statue lifts and drops its hand.

David
Gascoyne

REINTEGRATION

AFTER a plenitude of defeat, a load of sorrow,
Forget your coward victories, your crown of thorns,
And send the sulky eye-witness away;
Block out that solitary figure, the proud
Indomitable one. Hack down the heavy black
Statue. And because you can only remember
The darkest days of defeat, your weariness,
Because you can see but death's sinister finger
Always pointing to the shadowed wall,
Raise no more gloomy monuments, or build
A more transparent wall.

And listen
To the rich voice like flute-voice breaking
Suddenly from the white marble larynx:
Sunlight breaking suddenly upon the naked torso
Like the rustling down of a flimsy dress.
Listening, join strong singing with the voice
As the sound of an inland sea now freed
Smashing its winter cage of ice and rushing
With liquid arms and hands of foam uplifted
Across the frozen lands toward the outer seas.

MIDSUMMER DUET 1934

Laura
Riding
and
Robert
Graves

First Voice

O THINK what joy that now
Have burst the pent grenades of summer
And out sprung all the angry hordes
To be but stuttering storm of bees
On lipping swoon of flowers—
That such winged agitation
From midge to nightingale astir
These lesser plagues of sting and song
But looses on the world, our world.

O think what peace that now
Our roads from house to sea go strewn
With fast fatigue—time's burning footsounds,
Devilish in our winter ears,
Cooled to a timeless standstill
As ourselves from house to sea we move
Unmoving, on dumb shores to pledge
New disbelief in ills to come
More monstrous than the old extremes.

Second Voice

O what regret that now
The dog-star has accomplished wholly
What promise April hinted with
Faint blossom on her hungry branches,

Laura And pallid hedgerow shoots.
Riding Exuberance so luscious
 and Of fruit and sappy briar
Robert Disgusts: midsummer's passion chokes
Graves 'No more!'—a trencher heaped too high.

And O what dearth that now
 We have sufficient dwelling here
 Immune to hopes gigantical
That once found lodgement in our heart.
What if less shrewd we were
 And the Dog's mad tooth evaded not—
 But quick, the sweet froth on our lips,
Reached at fulfilments whose remove
Gave muscle to our faith at least?

First Voice

Let prophecy now cease
 In that from mothering omens came
 Neither the early dragon nor the late
To startle sleeping errantries
Or blaze unthinkable futures.
 The births have not been strange enough;
 Half-pestilential miseries
 At ripeness failed of horrid splendour.
Our doomsday is a rabbit-age
Lost in the sleeve of expectation.

Let winter be less sharp
In that the topic heats now
Have winter foreflight in their wings,
Shaking a frostiness of thought
Over those aestive pleasures
Which now so inwardly belie
(Their fury tepid to our minds)
The outward truth of seasons—
We need not press the cold this year
Since warmth has grown so honest.

*Laura
Riding
and
Robert
Graves*

Second Voice

Let talk of wonders cease
Now that outlandish realms can hold
No prodigies so marvellous as once
The ten-years-lost adventurer
Would stretch our usual gaze with.
The golden apple's rind offends
Our parks, and dew-lapped mountaineers
Unbull themselves by common physic.
There comes no news can take us from
Loyalty to this latter sameness.

Let the bold calendar
So garrulous in counting
Fortunes of solar accident
Weary, and festive pipes be soft:
Madness rings not so wide now

Laura Around the trysting-oak of time;
Riding Midsummer's wiser by the touch
 Of other scenes and tempers.
Robert We need not write so large this year
Graves The dances or the dirges.

First Voice

But what, my friend, of love—
If limbs revive to overtake
The backward miles that memory
Tracks in corporeal chaos?
Shall you against the lull of censoring mind
Not let the bones of nature run
On fleshlorn errands, journey-proud—
If ghosts go rattling after kisses,
Shall your firmed mouth not quiver with
Desires it once spoke beauty by?

And what of beauty, friend—
If eyes constrict to clear our world
Of doubt-flung sights & ether's phantom spaces
Cobwebbed where miserly conceit
Hoarded confusion like infinity?
If vision has horizon now,
Shall you not vex the tyrant eyes
To pity, pleading blindness?

Second Voice

But what, my friend, of death

That has the dark sense and the bright,
Illumes the sombre hour of thought,
Fetches the flurry of bat-souls?
Shall you not at this shriven lamplit watch
Deny corruption with a frown
And scold that death lays not more low?
Shall you not on our linking wisdoms
Curse the swart shapes I living wear
In being dead, in being changed?

*Laura
Riding
and
Robert
Graves*

And what of jest and play—
If caution against waggishness,
(Lest I forget you) makes my mood too canting?
Shall you not laugh my gloom aside,
Finding in piety no grace or troth,
And raise from moony regions of your smile
Light spirits, nimbler on the toe,
Which nothing are—I no one?

First Voice

Suppose the cock were not to crow
At whitening of night
To warn that once again
The spectrum of incongruence
Will reasonably unfold
From day's indulgent prism?

Second Voice

Suppose the owl were not to hoot

Laura
Riding
and
Robert
Graves

At deepening of sleep
To warn that once again
The gospel of oblivion
Will pompously be droned
From pulpit-tops of dream?

First Voice

And shall the world our world have end
In miracles of general palsy,
Abject apocalyptic trances
Wherein creature and element
Surrender being in a God-gasp?

Second Voice

Or shall the world our world renew
At worn midsummer's temporal ailing,
Marshal the season which senescence
Proclaimed winter but we now know
For certitude of quiet after?